

**ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP**  
INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND REGIONAL GROWTH  
UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO  
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Co-Chairs:

Hon. Sean O'Connor  
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

Minutes of Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Meeting  
December 5, 2003

Members:

James Allen  
Robert Blanchard  
Daniel Boody  
Hon. Clyde Burmaster  
Hon. Elise Cusack  
Hon. William Davignon  
Brian Eldridge  
Hon. Wright Ellis  
Samuel Ferraro  
Hon. Judith Fisher  
Hon. Samuel Granieri  
Hon. Dale Larson  
Celeste Lawson  
Maria Lehman  
Hon. Peter McMahon  
Hon. Gerald Meal  
Lawrence Meckler  
Hal Morse  
Laurence Rubin  
Laura St. Pierre  
Hon. Mark Schroeder  
Hon. Demone Smith  
Hector Titus  
Charles Webb  
Peter Wendel  
Lawrence Witul

**Present:** O'Connor, Weinstein, Allen, Burmaster, Blanchard, Cusack, Davignon, Ellis, Ferraro, Lawson, Lehman, Meal, Meckler (proxy), Morse, Schroeder, Titus, Webb, Wendel, Casale, Doolittle, Geiger (proxy), Sheffer

**Excused:** Eldridge, McMahon, Rosenwasser

**Absent:** Boody, Fisher, Granieri, Larson, Rubin, St. Pierre, Smith, Witul

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m. by Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Co-Chairs Sean O'Connor and Barry Weinstein, MD, who referred to the meeting as a "reunion" on the occasion of the group's five-year anniversary. The Co-Chairs welcomed Erie County Legislature Chair Charles Swanick, Niagara County Legislator and incoming Chairman William Ross, Niagara County Manager Gregory Lewis, Jo Nasoff of the ECIDA, and staff members of the Erie County Legislature and University at Buffalo Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth (ILGRG).

The Co-Chairs thanked everyone for their commitment to the organization, and thanked Council of Utility Contractors President Tony Cimato and ILGRG Executive Director John Sheffer, II for sponsoring the breakfast and meeting. They noted that Legislators Swanick and Gerald Meal chaired their respective Legislatures when ENRP was founded, and mentioned the past co-chairs of the organization – Legislators Meal, William Pauly, Clyde Burmaster, and Bradley Erck.

In recognition of the group's anniversary, the Co-Chairs presented proclamations to those members who have served on ENRP for the full five years – Hon. Clyde Burmaster, Brian Eldridge, Samuel Ferraro, Hon. Gerald Meal, Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD, and Peter Wendel.

ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk informed the group that he gave a PowerPoint presentation on the five-year anniversary to the Niagara County Legislature and to the Erie County Legislature Regionalism Committee. Kniazuk also thanked the group for their commitment to ENRP, and to him as administrator for the full five years.

Ad Hoc:

Michael Casale  
Tim Doolittle  
Richard Geiger  
David Rosenwasser  
John Sheffer, II

Administrator:

Tod A. Kniazuk

Minutes of the September, 2003 meeting were approved.

Subcommittee Chair Hector Titus presented the Economic Development Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed, with **approval granted to undertake research for a small business development project by researching what programs currently exist to aid small businesses, and surveying recently opened businesses to assess their needs and how those needs are being met, with the goal of creating better awareness of and access to existing programs and determining what new programs need to be developed in the long-term.**

Subcommittee Member Wright Ellis presented the Government Affairs Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed. The subcommittee decided to hold off on asking for concept approval to form a committee to begin work on standardized terminology and zoning, but ENRP Member Samuel Ferraro volunteered to serve on such a committee when formed.

Subcommittee Chair Robert Blanchard presented the Tourism & Culture Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed. Blanchard also gave an update on the Regional Cultural Tourism Initiative. Kniazuk gave an update on the Buffalo cultural tourism directional signage pilot project.

Subcommittee Chair Hal Morse presented the Transportation Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed, with **approval granted for the Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership to endorse and become a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding Among Shoreline Trail Jurisdictions and Agencies.** Ferraro suggested that the MOU be amended to include a tie-in to other trail systems, a request that Morse said would be done.

**Approval was also granted for the Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership to generate a letter of support for the facilitation of discussion on a proposed Waterfront Linear Park, under the condition that the Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor Management Plan is represented.**

**Finally, approval was granted for the Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership to participate in and support an analysis of the future of the Grand Island bridges and/or Grand Island bypass alternatives, with studies to be conducted by the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council.** Swanick asked if this meant bridge expansion. Morse replied that the south bridge could potentially be expanded in the next decade. Swanick suggested that alternatives be studied as well. ENRP Member William Davignon noted that a study of alternatives is what Niagara

County Legislator Lee Simonson was looking for when he sponsored the resolution that asked ENRP and the GBNRTC to consider the issue.

Co-Chair Weinstein introduced an update on the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) by noting that a year ago the ENRP's Economic Development Working Group came up with the recommendation for a regional strategy, which the ILGRG is now working on. It is now time for a report on the REDS.

ENRP Ad Hoc Member John Sheffer noted that while the original intent was to present the draft report, for two reasons of timing he'd prefer to give a more detailed report on the electronic permitting initiative instead. First, e-permitting is in its rollout stage, and it is a bad time to do the REDS update. The draft REDS report was done under ENRP Member James Allen with the engagement of a technical advisory committee. There are now issues that need to be sorted through, among them new economy vs. traditional, and industry clusters. It is therefore time for those issues to be debated, rather than for us to be pushing that report. The timeframe for the REDS is unclear at this point, as the ECIDA may pull out of the effort.

With that, Sheffer gave a presentation on the e-permitting initiative. The contract is between the ILGRG and Erie County's Department of Environment and Planning, with strong support from ENRP. The pilot created an electronic method of applying for building permits. The pilot communities are the Town of Lockport, Wales, the Village of Hamburg, Amherst, and the City of Tonawanda. Ellicott and Ciminelli Development have tested the site. Sheffer called it a "non-threatening way to get collaborations." It is being presented to the municipalities in both counties; the question is whether they want to participate, as it is a voluntary effort.

Sheffer handed the presentation over to ILGRG IT Director Subbiah Mantharam, who demonstrated the site. The home page is found off of the Erie County website, but can also be accessed through a municipality's site. The site takes you through each step, and information can be tombstoned for future use. One benefit of the pilot is that all the pilot communities are now using standardized forms. Digital signatures are now fully legal, but each municipality has to decide if they want to allow them. Another issue is electronic payment; Erie County is working on an e-check system.

Co-Chair Weinstein asserted that the goal should be getting to zoning nomenclature, then zoning codes, then pre-permitting.

Sheffer mentioned that the inclusion of Lockport (at ENRP's urging) was a step toward Niagara County participation, and that the Institute will demonstrate the site to Niagara County municipalities as part of the pilot. If Niagara wants to be part of the site further, they need to work out an

understanding with Erie County. Monroe County has also expressed interest in the project.

ENRP Member Elise Cusack asked how easy it will be for municipalities to join. Sheffer replied it is very easy. Data needs to be entered, and they have to be trained to use the site. ENRP Ad Hoc Member Michael Casale asked about the cost. There is no cost to the municipalities, Sheffer said. The county is picking up the cost. Niagara would need to decide if they too wanted to pick up the cost, or leave the cost up to the municipalities.

ENRP Member Samuel Ferraro gave an update on the Framework for Regional Growth, which is on track for an August 2004 completion. Some of the first reports have been released, and can be found at [www.regionalframework.com](http://www.regionalframework.com). The next work product is an atlas with overlay maps reflecting the past 100 years of development.

Co-Chair Weinstein asked about the impact of the REDS situation on the Framework, as originally the Framework was to be coordinated with the Regional Economic Development Strategy, which in turn was to be a component of the Framework. Ferraro replied that issues of connectivity between the two need to be worked out, but called the REDS a good document. Weinstein added that the REDS is an excellent document. ENRP Member James Allen added that several folks have called the Framework a land use plan and that part of the problem is this mistaken perception. Ferraro agreed, mentioning that early press called it that, but it's not.

Ferraro also gave an update on power relicensing. Posted on the Relicensing Consensus Committee (RCC) website <http://niagara.nypa.gov> are 41 studies resulting from the stakeholders meetings. Studies will be reviewed every month next year. The RCC will review each of them and come back with recommendations as to whether the issues addressed in them were met. Settlement begins in Fall 2004, with the package done in August 2005.

There was no old or new business. Co-Chair Weinstein mentioned to the group that the position of ENRP administrator was secured for 2004 at the ILGRG. Kniazuk thanked the group for their support. The Co-Chairs thanked all present for their continued dedication to the organization. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Submitted by Tod A. Kniazuk  
March 22, 2004